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ABSTRACT

This paper profiles an educational reform program targeting academically and socially at-risk and underachieving students. The project began as a district-wide training program for school psychologists, guidance counselors, social workers, and elementary-level instructional consultants. The program focuses on helping schools to plan for and address their immediate and long-term student needs. Emphasis is placed on improving the social behavior of students, increasing student performance in the areas of social skills and aggression control, and in reducing incidents of school-based violence. Outlined here are the program's purpose; the implementation period; characteristics of the program's site; the targeted population; the services provided; the type of staff available and the percentage of time devoted to the program; program costs; funding sources; problems encountered and solutions; program accomplishments/reported outcomes; and evaluation data--two tables provide specific outcome data. The project establishes six primary goals: (1) enhance teachers' problem-solving skills; (2) improve both the management skills of school personnel and student behavior; (3) enhance school's comprehensive services to students with below-average academic performance; (4) increase students' social and academic progress through enhanced involvement of parents and the community; (5) validate the various components of the project; and (6) create a school climate in which everyone is responsible for every student. Contains a list of two publications that describe/evaluate the program. (RJM)

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Promising Programs Profile Form

1. Program Title: Project ACHIEVE: A Collaborative, School-Based School Reform Process Improving the Academic and Social Progress of At-Risk and Underachieving Students

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II. Program Overview

PROJECT ACHIEVE is an innovative educational reform program targeting academically and socially at-risk and underachieving students. Project ACHIEVE began as a district-wide training program for school psychologists, guidance counselors, social workers and elementary-level instructional consultants. Project ACHIEVE focuses on helping individual schools to strategically plan for and address their immediate and long-term student needs. Project ACHIEVE places particular emphasis on improving the social behavior of students, increasing student performance in the areas of social skills and aggression control, and in reducing incidents of school-based violence. In particular, this is done through an integrated process that involves organizational and resource development, comprehensive in-service training and follow-up, and parent and community involvement all leading to direct and preventive services for our at-risk students. There are seven (7) components to Project ACHIEVE. These are: (1) Strategic Planning and Organizational Analysis and Development; (2) Referral Question Consultation Process (RQC); (3) Effective Classroom Teaching/Staff Development; (4) Instructional

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Consultation and Curriculum-Based Assessment; (5) Behavioral Consultation and Behavioral Interventions including the school-wide and parent/community use of social skills (or problem-solving) and aggression control training; (6) Parent Training, Tutoring, and Support; and (7) Research and Accountability.

The training is facilitated by pupil services personnel and involves regular and special education teachers, paraprofessionals, bus drivers, school staff (custodial, cafeteria, office), substitute teachers, and volunteers. In addition, the training is extended to and utilizes parent involvement and community agencies (after care facilities, community-based programs). A unique aspect of the training is the use of a "training of trainers" format designed to increase the number of individuals (particularly pupil services personnel) who can train others within the school district and the community.

III. Program Purpose

Project ACHIEVE has six primary goals:

1. To enhance the problem-solving skills of teachers such that effective interventions for social (in particular violence) and academic difficulties of at-risk students were developed and implemented.
2. To improve the building and classroom management skills of school personnel and the behavior of students (reduce antisocial, increase prosocial) in order to create a disciplined environment within which to learn (increased academic engaged time) through the use of a building-based social skills and aggression control training program.
3. To improve the school's comprehensive services to students with below-average academic performance such that they are served, as much as possible, in the regular classroom setting and have equal access to high quality educational programs. This goal is based on the assumption that students who can succeed in an environment are less likely to act out against that environment. Violence prevention/intervention programs must address the academic component of educational settings.
4. To increase the social and academic progress of students through enhanced involvement of parents and the community in the education of their children, specifically through their direct involvement with schoolwork of their children and youth through the development of improved parenting skills and community-based academic support activities.
5. To validate the various components of Project ACHIEVE and to develop demonstration training sites for district personnel in the expansion of this model to other school settings.

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6. To create a school climate in which each teacher, staff member, and parent believes that everyone is responsible for every student in that building and community.

4. Implementation Period

Project ACHIEVE began in August of 1990 and continues through the present time. Data were collected on the outcome measures for two years prior to Project implementation.

5. Characteristics of Program Site

Polk County School District: Polk County School District has approximately 34,000 elementary students, 28% of whom are minorities, 48% of whom receive a free or reduced lunch and 8% of whom receive Chapter 1 services. Jesse Keen, a Chapter I elementary school, has 647 students, 73% of whom receive free or partial breakfast/lunch and 41% of whom are of ethnic minority affiliation.

Hillsborough County School District: Hillsborough County School District serves approximately 131,800 students. 40% of whom are minority students in 148 school buildings with a total instructional staff of over 7800 professionals. Project ACHIEVE is implemented in four elementary buildings (Robles, Cleveland, DeSoto, and Bryan-Plant City) designated as "School-Wide Projects Schools", based on qualifying for school-wide Chapter I funding. Each of the schools has approximately 800 students from low SES families. Each school has at least 75% of the student population on free- or reduced-lunch programs.

6. Target Population

Project ACHIEVE is implemented in schools with a high number of at-risk children and youth. These include school-wide Chapter 1 schools, schools participating in Full-Service school programs, schools with large numbers of special education referrals each year, and schools at-risk for multiple incidences of violence. At the present time approximately 80% of the schools participating in this project are Chapter I school-wide or Full-Service schools. There are two districts participating in Project ACHIEVE in the Tampa, Florida area. At the present time, nine schools from the two districts are participating.

Grade/Age Range: Pre-K through Middle School

Number of Students: 5500

7. Services Provided

The Project provides direct training of school-based and community personnel in the following areas: 1) problem-solving; 2) social skills and anger replacement training; 3) effective teaching/instruction; 4) curriculum-based assessment; 5) parent education and training in social and academic behavior; 6) organizational planning, development, and evaluation.

School-based services for students (in addition to the staff training noted above) include: 1) school psychological; 2) counseling ; 3) mental health consultation; 4) parent educator; 5) school-based health; 6) child protection/public welfare; 7) special education; 8) speech/language; 9) specialized educational (e.g. reading discovery); and 10) computer assisted instruction.

8. Type of Staff Available and Percentage FTE Devoted to Program

Note: With the exception of the project manager, the staff and FTE equivalents represent staff available in <u>each</u> of the nine buildings involved with the project.

This project is a joint project between the School Psychology Program at the University of South Florida and the Polk and Hillsborough County School Districts. Coordination is facilitated through the Offices of the Superintendent, Full-Service Schools, Student Services and Psychological Services. Across the schools involved, the following groups and/or agencies collaborate with the project at the school-based level:

a. Full-Service Schools Project
b. Mental Health Center
c. Chapter 1 Services
d. Pre-K Programs
e. Parents-Through the Parent Drop-In Centers
f. Psychological Services
g. Guidance and Counseling
h. Social Work
i. School Health Services
j. Drug-Free Schools Program

Project ACHIEVE is an integrated service delivery project that designs and implements intervention-based services to students rather than making students conform to pre-existing services. Therefore, to the greatest extent possible, all intervention services (social skills

training, academic instruction, assessment practices, behavioral intervention) and special education services are delivered through the regular education setting.

Staff	Percentage FTE
Project Manager	1.0
School Psychologist	0.8
Counselor	1.0
Parent Educator	1.0
Mental Health Consultant	0.4
Speech/Language Therapist	1.0
Instructional Consultant/Master Teacher	1.0
School Nurse/Health Aide	1.0
Pre-School Teachers	2.0

In addition to the above staff, each school has a principal, assistant principal, and regular and special education teachers to meet the needs of students in the school.

9. Cost of Program and Funding Sources

Funding Sources:

- U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs (Personnel Preparation and Field Initiated Studies)

  Total Amount: $1.1 Million

- Florida Department of Education, Office of Interagency and Related Services

  Total Amount: $465,000.0

- Local Effort
  - GTE Business Partnership
  - Chapter 2 Funds
  - Pride of Polk County
  - Governor's Grant Through Pride of Polk County
  - Drug Free Schools
  - George Jenkins Foundation

Program Cost: Approximately $125-135 dollars per student per year.

10. Problems Encountered and Solutions

General

Project ACHIEVE is a school reform project and is all about change. As with any change project, even one that is requested and sought by districts and buildings, resistance and barriers

emerge as more and more is expected of the people in the environment. We have found that the primary solution to this problem of emerging resistance is building-level decision making and on-going strategic planning and evaluation. Prior to project implementation in any building, the staff of each school involved in Project ACHIEVE must vote, as a staff, to accept and participate in the project. At least 80% of the staff must approve the implementation of the project prior to starting. Building principals compete a "Project ACHIEVE Checklist" designed to evaluate the extent to which building commitment, resources, and personnel are available and ready to implement the project. In Project ACHIEVE buildings, teachers and staff from each grade level meet twice each month to review the program components and the outcomes that are achieved. In addition, each group identifies problem areas and potential solutions. Teachers and staff are given the time to problem solve and the training to do so effectively. The goal is to have an effective problem-solving process in place in each building that can address problems as they arise. The development of this process takes three to five years for each building.

Specific Problem Areas

1. Parent Involvement: This is an ongoing problem for the Project Schools. All of the project schools are in areas affected by poverty, high rates of unemployment, and family units that are ever changing. We have increased parent involvement in the following ways: 1) offered parent education programs that include child care and meals; 2) hired parents who previously participated in the parent education programs as parent educators the following year; 3) involved parents in classroom activities for their children and youth; and 4) offered outreach services by having parent educators go to the homes rather than expecting parents to come to school.

2. Consistent Implementation of Social/Behavioral Programs:

11. Program Accomplishments/Reported Outcomes

PROJECT ACHIEVE began at Jesse Keen Elementary School in August, 1990. Since the Project has begun, we have seen the following results at Jesse Keen Elementary School and similar results in the other schools involved:

- Discipline referrals to the principal's office decreased by 67% and bus referrals to the principal's office by 84%. Specifically, referrals for disobedient behavior decreased 86%, fighting by 72%, and disruptive behavior by 88%. In particular, the **number of fights** was reduced from 215 per year to approximately 65.

- Referrals of at-risk students for special education testing decreased 75% while the number of teacher consultations resulting in the implementation of effective academic and behavioral interventions by the regular classroom teachers significantly increased (from virtually none to more than 90). (See Table 2)

- Placements of at-risk students into special education classrooms decreased by 67%, focusing particularly on placements for students with learning and emotional disabilities, while increasing the accuracy rate for placements so that the assessment process was more cost- and time-efficient. (See Table 2)

- The suspension rate decreased from 10% of the student population (approximately 65 students) to 3% of the student population (approximately 19 students), decreasing, at the same time, the money and time expended for formal disciplinary hearings relating to those suspensions. (See Table 1)

- Grade retention of students decreased from an average of 61 students per year during the two years before Project ACHIEVE to 1 student during the two years after the beginning of Project ACHIEVE. (See Table 1)

12. Evaluation Data

INDICATORS OF EFFECTIVENESS

Indicators

•Student Outcomes: Discipline Records, Suspension/Expulsion Records, Grade Retention Records, Special Education Referrals, Placements, Decertification, Student Achievement Scores, Student Portfolios, Attendance

•Teacher Outcomes: Frequency of Social Skills Training in Classroom, Evaluation of Integrity of Training, Teacher Referrals to Office

•Direct/Indirect: Frequency of Use by Non-Instructional Personnel, Extent to Which Curriculum is Incorporated into Parent Education and

Training, Extent to Which Curriculum is Coordinated Between Home and School

•School Outcomes: Discipline, Suspension/Expulsion, Grade Retention Records
Teacher Satisfaction Measures
School Climate Measures
Grade-level and Building Strategic and Annual Outcome Plans
School Achievement Scores
Teacher Attendance/Student Attendance
Parent Involvement and Business Partnerships
Parent/Community Evaluation and Satisfaction Measures

Data Collection Schedule

Monthly:

•Discipline, suspension/expulsion, and attendance data are usually compiled each month from computer print-outs requested through the school office.

•Average number of social skills training sessions per week. Teachers complete easy checklist (1 minute).

•Number of teacher/staff training, parent education, and other technical assistance sessions conducted.

•Information regarding methods and frequency of home-school contacts (e.g., teacher newsletter home)

End-Of-Year:

•Grade retention, average student attendance, achievement scores.

•Teacher/Parent/Community Satisfaction Measures assessed through a survey that takes about 10 minutes to complete.

13. Publications Describing/Evaluating Program

Knoff, H.M., & Batsche, G.M. (In Press). Project ACHIEVE: Analyzing a school reform process for at-risk and underachieving students. School Psychology Review.

Knoff, H.M., & Batsche, G.M. (1993). A school reform process for at-risk students: Applying Caplan's organizational consultation principles to guide prevention, intervention, and home-school collaboration. In W.P. Erchul (Ed.), Consultation in community, school, and organizational practice (pp. 123-148). Washington, D.C.: Taylor and Francis.

Table 1

Project ACHIEVE Outcome Data for Jesse Keen Elementary School (JKES) during the Year Before (1989-1990) and Three Years After (1990-1993) Project Implementation and for the Comparison School (CS) during the Second Year of Project Implementation

Outcome Measure	1989-1990 JKES (N=633) N	Proportion	1990-1991 JKES (N=658) N	Proportion	1991-1992 JKES (N=672) N	Proportion	1992-1993 JKES (N=613) N	Proportion	1991-1992 CS (N=428) N	Proportion
Referrals to Special Education	66	10%	34	5%	24	3%	16	2%	43	10%
Students Placed into Special Education	36	6%	32	5%	14	2%	14	2%	30	7%
Disciplinary Referrals- Total	462	73%	564	86%	326	48%	325	53%	220	51%
Disciplinary Referrals- School	237	37%	393	60%	179	27%	173	28%	NA	
Disciplinary Referrals- Bus	225	35%	171	45%	147	21%	152	24%	NA	
Student Grade Retentions	38	6%	2	.003%	0	0%	4	.006%	23	5%
Out-of-School Suspensions	58	9%	69	11%	18	3%	20	3%	21	5%

Table 2

Percentage of Change in Outcome Measures at Jesse Keen Elementary School Across the Implementation Years (1990-1993) and as Compared to the Baseline Year Before Project Implementation (1989-1990)[a]

Outcome Measure	Percent of Change Baseline Year to Year 1 (1990-1991)	Percent of Change Year1 to Year 2 (1991-1992)	Percent of Change Year 2 to Year 3 (1992-1993)	Percent of Change Baseline to Year 3 1990-1993
Referrals to Special Education	-51%	-31%	-27%	-75%
Students Placed into Special Education	-16.7%	-60%	0%	-67%
Disciplinary Referrals- Total	+18%	-44%	+10%	-28%
Disciplinary Referrals- School	+62%	-55%	+4%	-25%
Disciplinary Referrals- Bus	+22%	-54%	+14%	-32%

**There were no consultation cases prior to the implementation of the project (baseline). Therefore, no change data can be calculated until after project implementation.

[a] Percentage change based on proportional data to control for changes in total student enrollment from year to year.